1: Bowen-Jones et al. K-5 (1955-1958) 1961
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their designation with a certain tolerant wisdom. Not so the present young generation in the farming community for whom education and material facilities have presented the chance of escape from a social inferiority complex.

The village was traditionally the community-group in rural Malta. Contact with the towns and Valletta was limited, especially for the villages of the west and in Gozo, until buses, press and rediffusion narrowed the gulf, but it was hardly less than the contacts between the villages themselves. The village was the group for most social interaction. Currently, the trend is towards a Malta-wide community-group in which villages are losing much of their isolation, although there is very little uniformity in this process. Sub-urban villages are clearly absorbing non-rural characteristics much more quickly than is the case in outlying parts of the Islands.

The nucleus of village life is the Church and the first citizen is the Parish Priest. The Priest combined teaching and general advisory duties with his spiritual role (see Chapter VI C). He was also the main link with the world outside the village through his relaying of general news from his pulpit. Normally, land transfers and a wide variety of matters connected with the agricultural cycle were announced by the Priest. The Church was the social meeting place and the basis of institutionalised activity. Even the village *festa*, that single day of wild exuberance, noise, fire-works, procession and carnivalesque has as its pretext a religious observance such as the honouring of the particular Saint of the village or the National Feast of the Shipwreck of St. Paul. In all this, the link between Priest and people was often further cemented by wide kinship connexions within the village. The son of an illiterate farmer might progress through Seminary and University to return to his home village as a priest and to be claimed as a relative by many members of that static and much inter-married community.

Such proximity, together with the very number of the priesthood in any parish made for a familiarity with the personnel of the Church just as confession, fasting, observance of Saints' and other special days, quite apart from the daily Mass, made for close acquaintance with its practice.

It is convenient to use the past tense in the foregoing only because the picture sketched has been modified in recent decades. It is however still the essential basis of communal life, especially in the rural community which, as suggested, holds to traditional custom longer than does the town. The modifications which have appeared are important in this present consideration because they lie behind the current social upheaval in which the individual countryman is being faced with a clash of new against old. If, as seems possible, he leaps to the new so completely as to relinquish the old entirely, then the traditional order of society will disappear along with the agricultural system on which it is based. This is the problem of the farmer in Maltese rural society.

An early non-religious movement was that of the Band Clubs; the first appeared in Rabat in 1860. But even these came to be identified with particular Churches and also with parish rivalries. The Band Club grew to become a major feature of social life in both town and country in Malta, although in Gozo it has had only a limited extension outside Victoria.

The Band Club is essentially a male organisation. Women have never been more than tolerated spectators and, to this extent, the movement reflects the place of women in Maltese society. Emancipation of women has spread into the countryside from the towns but even today women take an undemonstrative part in village activity and their movement outside the home is largely confined to Church-going, shopping and possibly field-work. The modern young woman who has had at least eight years schooling seeks paid employment beyond the house and fields. In rural circles the tendency is still to frown mightily at such a suggestion but it can only be a matter of a few years before what is now accepted in Valletta becomes tolerated in rural Gozo.

Functional diversification has been the keynote of twentieth century village society in the Maltese Islands. There is no evidence to show that there is any challenge to the position of the Parish Priest in matters religious (the situation has been less satisfactory from the point of view of the Church in urban Malta)

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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level. There are also many village clerks and teachers who speak English to their children to help prepare them for school, for a sound command of English is a prerequisite to social advancement.

It is quite true that education has been given greater emphasis in the urban areas than in the villages; but the introduction of compulsory education between the ages of six and fourteen is rapidly closing this gap. The spread of education is reflected in the decline of illiteracy. In 1948, just two years after the introduction of compulsory education, 16 per cent of the population of Valletta and Sliema over fourteen years of age, and 47 per cent of the same age group in Gozo, were illiterate. By 1957, these figures had fallen to 9 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. During the same period, the national illiteracy rate declined from 37 per cent to 17 per cent.[1]

A number of other forces operate to reduce the social distance between town and country. The greater employment opportunities during and after the war, and the continuous improvement in public transport that allowed the villagers to take advantage of them, have placed an ever-increasing number of villagers alongside townsmen at desks and work benches. The war itself was a major force in the same direction, for British troops and people from the urban areas were evacuated to the country to escape the bombing attacks, and so shared the life of their rural neighbours. All learned a good deal from one another. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Maltese, especially in the villages, regard the last war as a social milestone, a dividing line between past dependence upon agriculture and present wage labour, between poverty and relative prosperity.

II

The inhabitants of the villages in Malta no longer derive their livelihood from agriculture, though this was the rule a century ago. Today most are semi-skilled and unskilled industrial labourers who work outside their villages for the Malta Government, the

[1] *Eleventh Census of the Maltese Islands, 1948* (Valletta, Progress Press), pp. 297 ff.; and *1957 Census of the Maltese Islands: Report on Population and Housing* (Valletta, Central Office of Statistics, 1958), pp. 41 ff. The two sets of figures are not quite comparable. Those for 1948 represent the total number of illiterates, while the 1957 figures show only the number of people who never attended school.

2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

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621
625
793

of government. While the parish priest in Malta is the official village representative of the Church and has authority to act for it on most matters, the police represent only the law enforcement function of government; all other functions and services of government are administered from Valletta. In this respect the villages of Malta are unique.

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On the other hand, there is a relation between social status and the functional requirements of the authority system. In any given community, the people with the highest status usually fill the most important offices, since such offices require the standing, skills and contacts which they possess. There is thus a rough grading of office holders in terms of their social status and the authority and prestige attached to their offices. Upward mobility through this structure is usually dependent upon factors such as education and occupation rather than on having held other, and less important, offices. Once a person has become the president of his local band club, in other words has attained the highest secular office in the village, and has a social status which commands respect outside, he may be elected to political office.

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2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
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Children begin to express partit affiliation when they are between twelve and fourteen years old. At this age they are old enough to follow the processions and take part in the demonstrations on their own. Fund raisers make demands on them, and they are asked to help decorate the streets. At this age they also begin to play in the band. A youngster would jeopardize his social standing with his elders and with his age mates if he failed to take a firm position with regard to one of the saints. This would remove him from much of the community's social life. Consequently, by the time a village boy has reached fifteen, he has usually selected his partit, thus accepting and becoming part of the fabric of partit rivalry which will hold him until he dies or leaves the village.

There is some relation between occupational class and partit affiliation: in general, the supporters of titular saints belong to a higher occupational class than their rivals. The reason for this will be discussed a little later. The data I gathered in Farrug illustrate this correlation clearly. As shown in Table No. 6 below, 83 per cent of the village's professional and white-collar workers belong to the St. Martin partit, while only 38 per cent of those engaged in agriculture do so.

TABLE 6. Farrug: Partit Affiliation and Occupational Class

OCCUPATION	PARTIT AFFILIATION			
	Number	*Percentage of Lab. Force*	*St. Martin*	*St. Roque*
Professional and clerical	12	4	83%	17%
Service and skilled	115	39	55	45
Semi- and unskilled	124	42	48	52
Agricultural	45	15	38	62
Total	296	100		

So much for the origin and social composition of the partiti. I may just observe here that festa partiti are not usually based on territorial divisions. Since upward mobility does not involve change of partit, but is often accompanied by a change of residence, all residential areas are mixed. Nonetheless, there is a tendency for supporters of the titular partiti to live in the better residential area near the church, and for their rivals to live in the poorer sections more remote from the central square. This is a reflection of the differing occupational class of the members. This

leisure time in place of unpaid field work with his parents.

Pawlu admits nevertheless that much of the inferior condition of the farmer derives from his inability to unite with other farmers (Section 4). Illiteracy, ignorance and suspicion are the major causes of his fear. Only a few farmers are members of either of the two opposing Unions of Farmers while the situation regarding co-operatives is equally unpromising. Pawlu himself became one of the organisers of a special 'Tractor Co-Operative', initiated by C.A.R.E. at the end of 1958 (Section 2) for a group of farmers in his home village. The members paid £2 each on joining the co-operative and were thereafter able to hire one of the two tractors donated by C.A.R.E. at only 10/- per hour instead of the commercial 17s. The fact that Pawlu himself was among the organizers of such a novel venture reflects his progressive outlook, and his standing in the village.

*159 156 829 Politics interest Pawlu, to a more than average degree His concern is based on an informed intelligence. A supporter of the Labour Party, he considers the Nationalists as holding the masses in contempt and he points to their emphasis on the Italian language and the non-Maltese culture which it represented as evidence. He reads the local Maltese-language press but is sufficiently independent of mind to have cancelled his subscription to the 'Lehen is-Sewwa' (B/65) at the time of the 'Integration' referendum on the grounds that neither the Church nor the Paper would publish an 'official' statement on the attitude of the Church. Yet his religious devotion is without question and he has a respected place in Church and village life.

*159 156 829 593 [555] [167] The Family. Pawlu lives with his wife and six of his children. His eldest son and daughter are both working as teachers in Malta. Another daughter has emigrated.

Pawlu's wife speaks only Maltese and had as little formal education as her husband, but she has at all times nothing but encouragement for her family in their education In this case there is not the usual gulf in outlook between parents and children on account of the education of the latter - for the parents fully realize the need. Pawlu's [462] wife used to work in the fields when young but now spends her time in the house. Certain jobs remain her special concern however, notably cheese-making, care of lambs and chicks and egg-collection.

*159 156 108 593 [895] The eldest son, now working as a teacher, is one of the young 'intellectuals' who are currently making an appearance in Gozo. The ties of family and respect between him and his father are strong but he is out of touch with the